Topic B: Strategies to diminish the consequences of interrupted Education on Criminal behaviour and extremist involvement in West Africa

Introduction

Education is a fundamental right for youth across the world. It is a key factor that affects the way they perceive the world around them and teaches them to act in accordance with society. Oskar Anweller, a writer for Academic Room, states that "education is designed to guide them in learning a culture, moulding their behaviour in the ways of adulthood, and directing them toward their eventual role in society" (n.d.). However, the right to an education is not something accessible to everyone who needs it. Pearson reports that:

> One in five adults lack the written communication skills they need to progress in life, and 57 million children do not know what it's like to step inside a classroom. Many millions more are in education, but not learning effectively." (n.d.)

Due to the lack of educated children and teenagers worldwide, these become more vulnerable to developing criminal behaviours later on in life. Several studies have been conducted to examine the link between education and criminality, such as those by Anahuac University and the University of California Berkeley, and despite the different methods of research, they all agree that a significant number of convicted felons either interrupted their education or did not have access to it in the first place due to economic disadvantage, such as tuition fees that are sometimes impossible for parents to meet. According to the Huffington Post, "children of parents earning less than $15,000 a year have pre-primary enrolment rates about 20 percent lower than children of parents earning more than $50,000 a year" (2012). A situation of poverty, which is a constant similarity within youth with interrupted education, has shown to force children to forfeit schooling in favour of looking for a job in order to support their families, however, long hours and reduced salaries often lead these young people into criminality, as a way to obtain a larger amount of money in a shorter amount of time.

This is especially true in countries within the region of West Africa, such as Kenya and Somalia, since the rampant poverty that these people experience often pushes them to commit crime as a way to support themselves, as well as their families. According to 'Tomorrow in North America: Youth between the American dream and reality', poverty is "the chronic culprit for the symptoms of social decay: drugs, alcohol and sex-related problems that will affect the young as long as the family itself has difficulty facing the strains of inflation and unemployment" (UNESCO, 1980). Even though a considerable number of felonies committed by uneducated and impoverished youth are minor offenses, such as shop lifting, the constant spread of extremist groups within this region of Africa poses a great concern, since the desperate situation in which these young people live in make them ideal candidates for recruitment.

Reasons behind the lack of education in West African youth

In Kenya, an important amount of children, adolescents, and teenagers leave school for a variety of reasons, the most common one being to work for their families. According to a study by Abel Nyamesa Morara and Bernard Chemwei, from the School of Theology, Education and Arts Kabarak University in Kenya, the main reason for male teenagers to leave

school is to go look for work, which represented 18.6% of the total study population. Other popular reasons were traditional and cultural practices, peer influence, and indiscipline.

On the other hand, there were more circumstances that encouraged women's decision to leave school at a young age, mostly the fact that, according to Kenyan culture, women are to take care of household activities and other related endeavours. Pregnancy was the most common factor, representing 26.9%ofthetotal, followed by the necessity to work in order to maintain their family, which represented 12.92% of the cases. Other common reasons were a lack of money for tuition and school supplies, social influence and marriage.

Taking these statistics into account, it is important to point out that the lack of stable income in Kenyan communities is causing an increment in the number of children and teenagers that interrupt their education. Given their need to support themselves and their families, young men and women can risk their integrity and lives in order to join the workforce at a young age, and can become vulnerable to an involvement with organized crime.

Consequences of a lack of education
Education is regarded as one of the most important aspects of a society's composition, and the lack-there-of is an issue that should be addressed with urgency, as it can lead to several negative consequences to both individuals and their communities. According to Reference, "situations like teen pregnancy, gang violence, theft, drug use, and other crimes happen more frequently in non-educated settings" (n.d.), due to the fact that an under developed world view can make it easier to commit poor judgements. Also, this can greatly hinder a person's chances to obtain a steady income, as a majority of stable, remunerated jobs require a higher education degree. Aside from this, these type of job opportunities are sought after by thousands of young people, so an under-qualified suitor is at a disadvantage. Youth are therefore forced to have to find other jobs that bring with them lower income, which is often not enough for some families in Kenya, since families are often large, and situations such as illness often need more money to maintain.

Taking the aforementioned circumstances into consideration, we can see how a lack of education can lead to hardship in the labor sphere, and raises the probability of a young person to engage in illicit activities. In a study done by Stephen Machin and Sunica Vuji, they report that "having low education levels, especially possessing no Educational qualifications, is significantly associated with higher levels of offending" (2006). This statement was corroborated with information from the Offenders Index Database, and an imprisonment census. Inversely, social benefits in terms of crime reduction are often associated with a satisfactory academic performance (Lochner and Moretti, 2004).

Extremism in West Africa
One of the most alarming issues that West African has had to face is the growing number of extremist groups in the region. According to the West Africa Center for Counter-Extremism (WACCE): "West Africa has remained a notorious epicentre for radicalization and costly terrorism wrecking economic damage in billions of dollars annually" (n.d.).

Not only has extremism been a threat to African safety, but also, it has endangered economy as well. Violent radicalization has made foreign inversions in West African countries unstable, as the

precarious situation has affected commerce for tantalum and precious stones, the most important mining activity in the region. This lack of business has brought great economic damage, and has impoverished mining communities.

It is important to mention that each country has its own divided statement about how effective and trustful their government could be for this kind of problem. As quoted by the GSDRC Organization, "public trust in security forces varies widely by country generally   lower in the police than in the army" (n.d.).

The extremist threat has made the population experience constant feelings of anxiety, fear, uncertainty, and distrust, especially considering that certain international organizations have not lent aid to people in a state of vulnerability given the difficulty of the situation. However, organizations such as the International Crisis Group have focused on supporting the State and Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy, as well as providing media diffusion to the struggle, in order to let the world know about the situation, data, and in which ways the public can help, in an attempt to build a social resilience against extremism.

Recruitment techniques

One of the most dangerous characteristics of extremist groups is their ability to spread, and there is a clear profile that these groups tend to look for. The most common extremist targets are young people who are emotionally and psychologically vulnerable, as they are easily convinced by the promises of glory and fame that recruiters often use. Also, it is important to mention that, according to journalist Christopher Dickey, poverty is a major trigger for men, as societal norms have forced them to become breadwinners for themselves and their families. Dickey states that:

> It relates to the core question of how one proves one's manhood, retains one's dignity, reacts in the face of humiliation—which is the common experience of many people from Muslim backgrounds in Europe, especially young men without jobs and without the ability to start and sustain families. (2017)

Aside from the core profile for recruitment, modern technologies have played a major role within the expansion of extremism, as it has facilitated contact with young people all over the world. As quoted by Tim Cartwright, chief commissioner of police in Victoria, Australia, "the internet provides people opportunities to radicalize from across the world" (2015). As aforementioned, vulnerability is a crucial characteristic that recruiters look for, and young people who use the internet and social media as venting spaces are in major danger.

Overall, online recruitment can be separated into two groups, hosted sites and non-hosted sites. Hosted sites are those built and operated by extremist organizations, as a means to communicate internationally within members and potential recruits. These sites are only accessed through what is commonly known as the "Deep Web", but due to the public interest and new ways to access this area of the internet, it is easier than ever to visit these pages. On the other hand, non-hosted are those who were not originally created by extremist organizations, and whose main functions are not catered towards extremism, but are used as tools by recruiters to find gullible young people and convert them into their cause, either by convincing them to join their ranks in the Middle East, or to participate in extremist demonstrations within their own country.

Preventive Tactics and Possible Solutions

Several organizations have been founded in order to oppose the transnational threat. Amongst these organizations is the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), established in 1994 and integrated by Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. The Task Force was created with the purpose of countering cross-borders safety concerns, as well as the insurgency of group Boko Haram, within the Lake Chad region. (Musa, 2013)

Aside from the aforementioned MNJTF, there have been several popular uprisings against extremist groups. According to the Democracy Speaks Organization, "soft-power tactics such as empowering citizens and communities must be recognized as an important tool in establishing stability and preventing violent extremism" (2017). However, the lack of government support, and the absence of mediatic influence have made these efforts largely unsuccessful.

Taking all of these factors into account, a joint effort between the population and the government seems to be the most effective solution to manage this problem. A government initiative to facilitate education to the public will lead to a decrease in criminality and incarceration, as the resources given within education, as well as an informed world view, has been proven to distance young men and women from illicit activities, and will therefore make the youth less vulnerable to extremist recruiters, online or otherwise.

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Glossary

C   **Census:** A count for official purposes, mainly used to count the number of people living in a country and collect information about them.
Convicted: To find or prove to be guilty.
Culprit: One guilty of a crime or fault.

D   **Decay:** To decline from a sound or prosperous condition.
      Diminish: To make less or cause to appear less.
      Disadvantage: An unfavourable, inferior, or prejudicial condition.

E   **Endeavour:** Activity directed toward a goal.
      Enrollment: To insert, register, or enter in a list, catalog, or roll.
      Epicentre: The central point of something, typically a difficult or unpleasant situation.

F   **Fee:** A sum paid or charged for a service.
      Felon: A person who has committed a felony.
      Felony: A grave crime declared to be a felony by the common law or by statute regardless of the punishment imposed.
      Forfeit: To lose or lose the right to especially by some error, offense, or crime.

G   **Gullible:** Easily duped or cheated.

H   **Hinder:** To make progress slow or difficult.

I   **Illicit:** Forbidden by law, rules, or custom.
      Inflation: Acontinuing rise in prices caused by an increase in the money supply and demand for goods.
      Insurgency: An occasion when a group of people attempt to take control of their country by force.

P   **Peer:** One belonging to the same societal group especially based on age, grade, or status.
      Precarious: Characterized by a lack of security or stability that threatens with danger.
      Pre-Primary: Taking place before primary school.

R   **Rampant:** Profusely widespread.
      Remunerate: To pay an equivalent to for a service, loss, or expense.
      Resilience: The ability to be happy or successful again after something difficult or bad has happened.

S   **Salary:** Fixed compensation paid regularly for services.
      Shoplifting: to steal displayed goods from a store.
      Steady: Showing little variation or fluctuation.
      Strain: Something that causes anxiety, worry, or difficulty.

T   **Tantalum:** A gray-white ductile acid-resisting metallic element found combined in rare minerals and used especially in electronic components.
      Transnational: Extending or going beyond national boundaries.
      Trigger: An event that is the cause of a particular action, process, or situation.
      Tuition: A sum of money charged for teaching by a college or university.

Glossary for resolution projects

Preambulatory Phrases

Affirming	**Desiring**	**Noting with deep concern**
Alarmed by	**Emphasizing**	**Noting with satisfaction**
Approving	**Expecting**	**Noting further**
Believing	**Expressing its appreciation**	**Observing**
Bearing in mind	**Fulfilling**	**Reaffirming**
Confident		
Contemplating		
Convinced		
Declaring		
Deeply concerned		
Deeply conscious		
Deeply convinced		
Deeply disturbed		
Deeply regretting		

Fully aware Further deploring Further recalling Guided by Having adopted Having considered Having examined Having received Keeping in mind

Realizing Recalling Recognizing Referring Seeking Taking into consideration Taking note Viewing with appreciation Welcoming